

## Maj. Gen. Richard Zilmer Speaks with Seabees in Al Anbar Province



Maj. Gen. Richard Zilmer speaks with Seabees of NMCB-25. Zilmer had praise for the Seabees who are finishing their 2006 deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

take the great chemistry this team has become, and all the proficiencies that this team has developed, and we as a naval service, will reassign some of you elsewhere. Some of you will leave the Reserves; others will join.

NMCB-25 has completed the path most Seabee battalions follow on their way to mobilization. Two years ago they completed a year of military training, followed by a year of field exercises, and in this case, on to the Middle East to support the people of Iraq.

Even though many Seabees were busy completing projects and making final preparations before going home, Zilmer asked them to take the time to reflect upon what they have accomplished while they were here.

“Take stock of what you’ve got here,” said Zilmer. “You should feel very, very good about what you’ve accomplished as a battalion over here. You came over here with great expectations about what you could do for 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) (I MEF). The amount of work that you have done has enabled us to succeed as a MEF...in just a few words, I am absolutely amazed at the capabilities we bring.

Seabees have brought their professional trade skills in support of the military operations since World War II. Seabees largely support the mission of the Marines, but the Marines also support the Seabees in many ways, including military training.

During this deployment, Seabees and Marines often worked joint operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. “We’ve been a wind break for the Iraqi people,” said Zilmer. “That’s what we’ve been here to do – to provide that opportunity for democracy to take root, to take hold - for them to break out of an oppressive lifestyle that it has been for most of the young people of Iraq.”

Heavy on the minds of the Seabees of NMCB-25 has been the death of three of their fellow Seabees and the serious injuries to three more. “We’re not taking everybody home and it falls upon your shoulders here...you will meet the families of our lost shipmates and they will probably be there when you return back to Port

General Major Zilmer, Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD), spoke with Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five, on 10 Sept., as many of them prepared to make the transition from active duty back to members of a Reserve Component. Seabees listened intensely as Zilmer spoke about their accomplishments and what they might expect when they return home.

“This last seven months of active duty you have been a well-oiled machine,” said Zilmer. “You’ve been given task after task, day after day, and then going out and knocking down one after another. This unit is probably as good today as it’s ever going to be. Once we get you back into demob (demobilization), we



CDR David Marasco and Maj. Gen. Richard Zilmer meet informally before discussing operations in Iraq.




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Hueneme,” said Zilmer. “They are probably going to want to meet with you. They are going to want to hear what you have done.”

“There’s closure, if you will, for the families to be there,” said Zilmer. “Maybe they won’t, but I’ve seen at Twenty Nine Palms where that’s a phenomenon. Families still want to be there when the unit returns. And whether it’s every Veterans Day or Memorial Day, for the rest of our lives, it’s our responsibility to remember these shipmates that we have lost during this deployment. We’ve promised their families, we’ve promised ourselves, that we will never forget them, and that’s the task we have for the rest of our lives.”

Zilmer reminded the Seabees of the success being made everyday in Iraq - success that is largely measured in Iraq’s ability to safeguard its own future.

You need to feel very, very good about what you have done here; what you’ve given the nation, what you’ve given the Navy, what you’ve given this force,” said Zilmer. “Thanks again for everything you have done. Get home. Take care of each other. It has been an honor serving with each and every one of you, and I hope to see you around someplace in the future.” 

## Command Completes Visits to Seabees at Detachment Sites



CDR David Marasco and Command Master Chief (SCW/FMF) Brian Benzinger visit Seabees at a detachment site in Iraq this summer.

David Marasco, Commanding Officer of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25) and Command Master Chief (SCW) Brian Benzinger have been traveling throughout Western Iraq and meeting with Seabees throughout the deployment.

“The troops really appreciate it when the Commanding Officer and myself come on the job site because we can see what really great things they have been doing,” said Benzinger. “Our troops have done a lot of great things for the Marines and the Iraqi forces. Every Marine I’ve talked to at the BP’s (battle positions) gets a gleam in his eye when you ask them what the Seabees are doing. They can’t express enough thanks for the great things we are doing there.”

Often the Marines only have with them what they have brought on their backs. At these barren sites, even a hint of modern convenience becomes something important. “Some of the simplest things in life become some of the greatest things,” said Benzinger. “It’s just simple things like showers and head (restroom) facilities.”

Seabees do much more than improve living conditions for the Marines at these outposts. They also use their skills and equipment to reinforce bunkers and sleeping areas so Marines can be safer on watch and while they sleep. They also repair-damaged structures, make buildings weather tight and install new equipment.

“The biggest thing out there, that puts a smile to a young Marines face when he comes in off a hard days work on patrol, is...having his room air conditioned,” said Benzinger. “It has also brought a lot of good things for the Iraqi troops, giving them a better place to live, giving them a better place to sleep and work.”

Seeing first hand what effect the Seabees are having on the safety and morale of coalition forces in the area is a direct reflection force status.

Marasco and Benzinger conducted over 14 command visits over the past six-months in Iraq. The visits are important because the troops look to the command for up to date information and guidance.

“The troops want to hear what’s going on from the main body. Anytime we can get out there, it’s

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## Seabees and Marines Create Office Buildings for M.P. Unit

Seabee engineering aides stared at the rough desert terrain momentarily before hauling survey equipment out of their modified ambulance. There wasn't any time to waste. In less than a month, military police would follow in their footsteps - only when they arrived, they didn't expect to see desert, but rather a set of three new office buildings to support their unit.

With 25 days to go, the Seabees would build three, 2,000-square foot office buildings from the ground up. The first three days alone would be dedicated to bringing in fill so the area could be graded, wetted, and rolled to create a stable foundation.

After the surface was prepared and construction materials arrived, Seabee builders and engineering aides could begin formal construction of the new headquarters for Task Force MP.

The 32'x 64' buildings would have to be readied in time, including the installation of electrical and air conditioning units.

Working around the clock, a crew of 20 Seabees and eight Marines joined in the effort. Seabees overlapped three shifts of workers each day to maximize available resources, but they weren't alone.

Contributions of the Marine Wing Service Support Group (MWSS 274) were invaluable during construction. They completed much of the interior electrical work because Seabee electricians were already working on other projects at remote sites.

Builders were also in short supply during this period, but Seabees always use cross-training to maximize manpower issues. "The builders that remained were not only challenged by the short time



Seabees use a road grader to create a path to three new office buildings under construction.



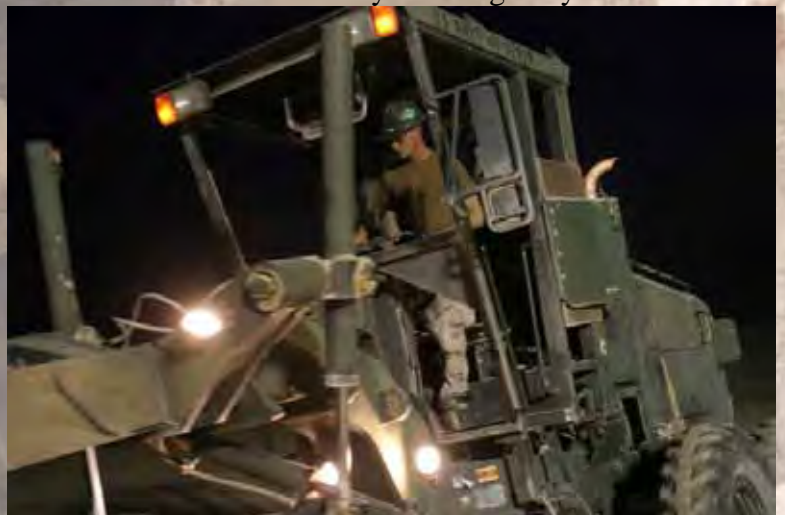
BU2 Edward Waters and IT1 Brian Laks cut wood for steps into the new office buildings. Seabees worked three overlapping shifts to complete the project by the target date.

frame, but they were also working with less experienced crews," said EOC (SCW) Kirk Ruetten. "But as construction usually goes, the first building takes the longest, the second one goes faster and boom, the third one is finished."

One other factor that crews had to contend with was unique lumber dimensions. "Size standards we use in U.S. are much different than what we see over here," said Ruetten. "The lengths and widths are different, and it makes a difference in the way you approach things."

Everyone knew this was a high-profile project. Seabees and Marines worked extra hours to complete the project on time. By the target date,

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EO2 Jeffrey Vanhoven operates a road grader during night operations. Temperatures and winds remained high throughout construction.




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important to bring them up to speed on what's going on, said Benzinger. "We can also share stories between them and the other troops."

The command also wants the Seabees to know that their efforts have not gone unnoticed. Marasco makes sure that he personally gives out each award. "When we go out there, we try and bring all the current awards up with us, but my biggest concern is the SCW (Seabee Combat Warfare) program," said Benzinger.

The SCW program helps Seabees focus learning on mission effectiveness, combat readiness and survivability. It also provides an overall understanding of how the unit's mission fits into and supports large objectives. "This is the way of the Navy and the way of the future," said Benzinger. "To see these guys put a lot of hard work into this program – I can't ask for more. Our younger troops have really engaged and participated in the program."


BU1 Thomas Reed updates CDR David Marasco, and CAPT Bowman on construction efforts at a new medical facility in Al Anbar province.

most members of NMCB-25, and to date, over 170 Seabees have earned the right to wear the SCW pin, while over 40 more have completed their Fleet Marine Force qualifications. 



HM1 Jessica Johnson reenlists for six years with the help of LTJG Richard Hoeg. Johnson has almost five years of active duty to her credit and has been a corpsman with the Seabees for one year. She has spent almost three years as a sailor in the Reserve Component and said she renewed her enlistment contract because she believes in serving her country and likes the fact that the Reserve Component allows her to see the world. "Being in a Reserve unit, I can kind of pick and choose where I get to go," said Johnson.

Seabees and Marines Create Office Buildings for M.P. Unit  
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the buildings were complete and members of Task Force MP moved their equipment and personnel into the new office spaces. As usual, the Seabees weren't on hand to witness their buildings being used – they were already off on other project sites completing other assignments. 



# SEABEE COMBAT WARFARE









## A 5x4 grid of 20 photographs showing various military personnel in camouflage uniforms receiving awards or certificates. The recipients are holding the awards, and the presenters are standing next to them. The background shows other personnel in uniform.



## SEABEE COMBAT WARFARE (SCW)





## FLEET MARINE FORCE (FMF)







## NAVY AND MARINE CORPS ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL





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## NAVY AND MARINE CORPS ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL





## NAVY AND MARINE CORPS ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL







## NAVAL RESERVE MERITORIOUS RESERVE MEDAL



SWC (SCW) Boyd Minarik reenlists with the help of CDR David Marasco